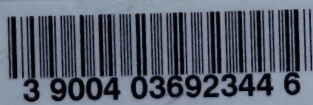


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CANADA AND THE NAVY

A SPEECH

DELIVERED BY

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

SIR WILFRID LAURIER

P.C., G.C.M.G., M.P.

(LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION)

*In Moving Amendment to the Naval Aid Bill
in the House of Commons on
December 12th, 1912*

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Canada and the Navy

Rt. Hon. Sir WILFRID LAURIER: Mr. Speaker, as I rise to present to the House the views of His Majesty's loyal Opposition upon the measure which has been presented to it by my right hon. friend, perhaps it will not be out of place if I refer to the fact that some few months ago a document came to me, as well as to my right hon. friend, signed by some of the most important citizens of Canada belonging to both parties, strongly urging that the subject of Imperial defence should be removed from the domain of contentious politics. The motive which animated these important and respected citizens is certainly worthy of all encomium, and, so far as I am concerned, meets altogether with my approbation; but I may be permitted to observe that if the question of Imperial defence has been introduced into the domain of contentious politics, the blame is not to be imputed to any one sitting on this side of the House.

How the Navy was Brought into Politics.

When four years ago, my hon. friend from North Toronto (Hon. Mr. Foster) introduced this subject in a concrete form, we were in control of the House, and the House will agree with me that we did not receive his motion in any carping spirit. The motion moved by my hon. friend was to this effect:

"That, in the opinion of this House, in view of her great and varied resources, of her geographical position and national environments, and of that spirit of self-help and self-respect which alone befits a strong and growing people, Canada should no longer delay in assuming her proper share of the responsibility and financial burden incident to the suitable protection of her exposed coast line and great seaports."

We received the proposition of my hon. friend quite sympathetically, and we suggested to him that it would be advisable to enlarge it and to bring it to the broader basis of Imperial defence, in view especially of the new conditions which were then and had been for some time arising in Europe. I am bound to say that our suggestion was well received by our friends on the other side, and they in turn offered us some amendments which we were only too glad to receive. The original motion of my hon. friend thus amended, was passed by the unanimous voice of Parliament. It was in these terms:

This House fully recognizes the duty of the people of Canada, as they increase in numbers and wealth, to assume in larger measure the responsibilities of national defence.

The House is of opinion that under the present constitutional relation between the Mother Country and the self-governing Dominions, the payment of regular and periodical contributions to the Imperial treasury for naval and

military purposes would not, so far as Canada is concerned, be the most satisfactory solution of the question of defence.

The House will cordially approve of any necessary expenditure designed to promote the speedy organization of a Canadian naval service in co-operation with and in close relation to the Imperial navy, along the lines suggested by the Admiralty at the last Imperial Conference, and in full sympathy with the view that the naval supremacy of Britain is essential to the security of commerce, the safety of the Empire and the peace of the world.

The House expresses its firm conviction that whenever the need arises the Canadian people will be found ready and willing to make any sacrifice that is required to give to the Imperial authorities the most loyal and hearty co-operation in every movement for the maintenance of the integrity and honour of the Empire.

The ink was scarcely dry upon that resolution before it was assailed from the ranks of the Conservative party, assailed from motives divergent and contradictory. One section affirmed that the duty of Canada towards the Empire would not be properly discharged by the creation of a Canadian navy, but that the only manner in which this duty could be discharged was by contributions from the Canadian treasury to the Imperial treasury. The other section, on the contrary, protested against the very idea either of a contribution or of the creation of a Canadian navy. This was introducing with a vengeance into the domain of contentious politics the question of Imperial defence and it also let loose passions which we had hoped were buried, but which we found were easily brought to life again. Can it be denied that the result was affected by these feelings in the last contest?

Under such circumstances, there might perhaps be some temptation to retaliate, and to create political capital out of the difficulties of the gentlemen who now occupy the Treasury benches,—difficulties which have resulted and culminated in the resignation of one of the most important of their number. But, Sir, the subject is too great, too sacred. By such methods we will not be impelled to act, by such methods we do not desire to win. I have stated before, and I now repeat—and I think that always I have been true to my pledge—that never would I utter a word which would be calculated to fan the flames which unfortunately this subject has rekindled. I have stated before, and again I repeat, that in the consideration of the measure which was to be brought forth, and which has been brought forth by the Administration, we would be guided by its merits, and by its merits alone. My right hon. friend, the other day, in presenting his resolution—and he presented it in terms to which I do not take exception, as I said at the time—stated that he was animated—this may not have been his exact words, but it is the effect of what he said—by no other purpose than to promote the welfare of Canada and of the Empire to which we belong. Let me say to my right hon. friend that I am glad to meet him upon this ground. If we differ from him on the policy which he has presented to the House, it is because we are firmly convinced, in our consciences and our souls, that the policy which we advocate is more conducive to the end which he says he has in mind than the policy which he has presented.

No Emergency. England in No Danger

Sir, the country expected and waited with great impatience for the announcement to be made, and which has now been made by the right hon. the Prime Minister after consultation with the Admiralty. Mr. Asquith, Mr. Churchill, Sir Edward Grey, had again and again asserted that England had no enemy, that she was prepared and ready for all comers. Still, there was an apprehension far and widespread that, somehow, somewhere, some mysterious danger was threatening England. And, indeed, some went so far as to say that England was on her knees, begging for support—an assertion which surely was more calculated to wound the pride of those to whom it was addressed than to create respect for those who uttered it. All these apprehensions, however, have been removed by the document which was placed on the table of the House by my right hon. friend. England is always England; she bows the knee to no one; she asks no favour from anybody; she does not come here as a suppliant, still less as a mendicant; but, to the enquiry of our ministers, she answered: Here are the facts set forth in this paper; judge for yourselves and act as you please. This is the language, and it is no other than what we might expect from English statesmen and the English people.

Sir, in other respects there is cause for rejoicing. This document shows that there is no emergency, that England is in no danger, whether imminent or prospective. But the document discloses a condition of things, of which indeed we knew, but upon which has now been placed the sanction of official correspondence. It shows that there has been going on in Europe for some years past a certain movement to which we cannot be indifferent. The armament of the great powers has compelled England to alter the strategic lines which hitherto have been essential to her security. The document discloses the fact that, on account of this increased naval armament, England, in order to maintain her security in her own waters, has been obliged to withdraw some of her naval forces from the distant seas. This, I believe, is a fair statement of what is disclosed by the document laid upon the table by my right hon. friend. In the face of this position, I now ask the question: What is the duty of the House of Commons, what is the duty of the people of Canada? That is the question.

Appeals to Prejudice by Conservatives in Quebec

But, before I proceed to give my answer, I think it would be advisable that I should come nearer home, and review the situation as it has been made by the division of the two parties during the last contest. During the last contest in the province of Quebec, the Conservative party, as a whole, with some exceptions, which I could count upon the fingers of one hand, or at most upon the fingers of two hands—contended upon hundreds of platforms that Canada owed nothing to England——

Some hon. MEMBERS: No, no.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: I am glad there are some hon. members who say, 'No, no,' to that statement. I cannot accept their denial; the facts are too patent. But at least the denial shows that these hon. gentlemen resent the conduct of some men with whom they are now forced to associate. The position taken, I repeat, by the Conservative party in

the province of Quebec—at that time they were not the followers of my right hon. friend; they were an independent party—was that Canada owed nothing to England and discharged its whole duty in the matter of defence simply by providing for the defence of her own shores. I am glad to say there is another spirit prevailing now. Conditions seen from another angle have changed the view. But when harmful doctrines of that kind have been preached for months and years, that preaching leaves behind it an impression which it is much more easy to create than it is afterwards to destroy.

We have recently heard throughout the province of Quebec that we owe nothing to England, because in the long chapter of our diplomatic history she has sacrificed our interests in the adjustment of the boundaries between ourselves and our neighbours to the South. For my part, I have often stated that in such questions British diplomacy has not shown itself to advantage. And what conclusion are we to draw from this? Are we to draw the conclusion that England was indifferent to our interests? Nothing of the kind. Are we to draw the conclusion that England wantonly sacrificed our interests? Still less may this be presumed. The only conclusion we can draw is that in these matters British diplomatists were not as well informed as those of the United States in regard to every inch of ground which was in issue. This shows conclusively that local matters are always better dealt with by those responsible for local administration. The fact is undeniable that, practically ever since we have had in our hands the conduct of our diplomatic relations, Canada has suffered no sacrifice. In the last dispute we had with our neighbours, on the question of the Atlantic fisheries, not only did we not suffer any sacrifice, but we obtained recognition of rights which had been long denied.

As a result of this deleterious preaching to which I referred a moment ago, we have lately heard in the province of Quebec that England, forsooth, had sacrificed our interests because she had not interfered on behalf of the South in the American civil war! The young gentleman who made that assertion I know quite well. It was not his better nature that thus spoke, and I am sure he will some day appreciate the fact—if he has not already done so—that if there is one thing which tends to the glory of England it is that when the North and the South were engaged in that titanic struggle resulting in the abolition of African slavery, she would not interfere as against what might have been her own interests; and, as a result of her non-interference, that blot upon Christian civilization has forever been wiped out. England is too great to fear or to begrudge the greatness of the United States, and no British subject, wherever he may be, has any cause to resent or fear the rise of any other power.

Canada's Position Within the Empire

Sir, there does not exist the necessity for our saying what we owe to England. We are British subjects; we do not want to be anything else; and that settles the whole question. If there are men in the Province of Quebec who will not recognize this truth, let me appeal to them from another point of view—from the baser motive of selfishness. We have been immune from invasion by the sea ever since we became subjects of England by the Treaty of Paris in 1763. But can we say to-day that

we are now immune from invasion by the sea? At the end of the seventeenth century, there were only three maritime powers in Europe—England, France and Spain. In 1805, at the memorable battle of Trafalgar, the naval forces of France and Spain were crushed. Spain never recovered from the blow; but France, owing to her marvellous recuperative strength, soon built a navy second only to that of England. The navy of France ranks to-day second or third among those of the different countries of Europe; but, happily, we have nothing to fear from France. The *entente cordiale* has brought France and England together in such close friendship that war between these countries would, I am sure, be regarded by either nation as equivalent to civil war in any one of them. I have heard that the late Queen said on one occasion she would rather die than see another war between England and France. The good Queen did not live to see accomplished that dream of her life, the ‘*entente cordiale*,’ but it was left to her son to accomplish it, and we to-day receive the benefit of it. There are other maritime powers to which we are exposed, although I do not apprehend any attack from them, nor do I consider that there is even any contemplated; but I am sure we must all agree that when increased armaments are going on we cannot afford to be idle and rest upon a sense that our security in the past would be a guarantee of security in the future.

It has also been said in the province of Quebec during the last contest that we could rely on the Monroe Doctrine. To anyone who would rely upon the Monroe Doctrine, I would say, let him examine the record of Cuba after the Spanish-American war. When the Cubans were desirous of removing the yoke of Spain, they appealed to the United States for help, and they got it, but when, with the assistance of the United States, they had freed themselves from the control of Spain, they found that they had a rather high price to pay for the help they had received. That price was the abridgement of a portion of their independence. After the war was over, the people of Cuba naturally wanted to establish a regular government of their own. They called a convention and adopted a constitution, but that constitution had to go to Washington for revision, and there after three months discussion, certain conditions were imposed upon Cuba which to the people of that country were extremely distasteful, which convention they adopted by a narrow majority of five. The following conditions were made part of the constitution of Cuba:

Cuba shall not make any foreign treaty which may tend toward placing the independence of the island or any portion thereof in jeopardy; no loans can be issued unless a surplus of revenue is available for the service of such obligations; the United States can intervene to preserve the independence of Cuba or to insure protection for life and property; the Acts of the United States military administration in Cuba since 1898 are recognized as valid; proper hygienic precautions must be taken to protect public health on the island; the ownership of the Isle of Pines is left for future consideration; coaling stations shall be sold or leased to the United States in localities to be hereafter decided.

This shows how much Cuba had to discard of her sovereign power for the sake of the Monroe Doctrine. We have to take our share in the defence, not only of our native shores, but of the Empire as a whole. We can defend ourselves only by the assistance of the Mother Country.

The Need at the Present Time

Now, I come back to the question which I put a moment ago upon the condition disclosed by the memorandum of the Admiralty. Let me state it again. As a result of the armaments which are now going on in Europe, England has been obliged to increase the margin of security which she relies on for her own defence, by reducing her naval forces in the outlying seas. Such is the condition; and, I ask once more, what is the remedy? In our humble judgment, the remedy is this, that wherever, in the distant seas, or in the distant countries—in Australia, Canada or elsewhere—a British ship has been removed to allow of concentration in European waters, that ship should be replaced by a ship built, maintained, equipped and manned by the young nation immediately concerned. If the young nations of the Empire take hold of the equipment and manning of ships to look after the distant seas, concentration can easily take place in the waters of Europe, and the British Admiralty knows what zones it has to defend. This is the Australian policy; this ought to be the Canadian policy. I insist once more upon what is stated in the memorandum: There is no emergency, there is no immediate danger, there is no prospective danger. If there were an emergency, if England were in danger—no, I will not use that expression; I will not say if England were in danger, but simply if England were on trial with one or two or more of the great powers of Europe, my right hon. friend might come and ask, not \$35,000,000, but twice, three times, four times \$35,000,000. We would put at the disposal of England all the resources of Canada; there would not be a single dissentient voice.

Both Parties Favored a Canadian Service Naval

But this is not the condition with which we have to deal. The condition that we have to deal with to-day is simply what I described a moment ago. This is not new. The memorandum which my right hon. friend submitted the other day disclosed nothing which we did not know before. Every word that is there we knew; every figure we knew. I may say more; every word, every figure in that memorandum we discussed four years ago. We discussed it in the month of March, 1909; and then we came to the conclusion, the unanimous conclusion, that the best method of helping England, of discharging our duty, was not by contribution, but by the creation of a Canadian navy. Sir, I remember very well the question on that occasion, and those who were present in the House at that time cannot have forgotten it. This question gave rise to one of the most important debates which, in the some thirty years of my own experience, the Parliament of Canada ever saw. I remember the speech of my hon. friend from North Toronto (Mr. Foster), an excellent speech, one of the very best he ever made, and that is paying a great compliment, well deserved. I remember the speech of my right hon. friend (Mr. Borden), the present Prime Minister, and if ever a man gave reasons against the policy which he has now introduced, my hon. right friend gave those reasons on that occasion. This is his language:

In so far as my right hon. friend the Prime Minister to-day outlined the lines of naval defence of this country, I am entirely at one with him. I am entirely of opinion, in the first place, that the proper line upon which we should

proceed in that regard is the line of having a Canadian naval force of our own. I entirely believe in that. The other experiment has been tried as between Australia and the Mother Country and it has not worked satisfactorily in any respect. In Great Britain the contribution has perhaps been regarded as rather unsatisfactory. In Australia it failed, in the end, to meet with the approval of the people for the reason that Great Britain felt constrained to ask Australia that the field of operations of the squadron should be extended to the China and Indian seas; and when the operation of that squadron was so extended, the Australians felt that the contribution which they had been making for some years past was not really being used to give that protection to Australia which her interests demanded. So that the policy of Australia at the present time is to build up a flotilla of submarines and torpedo boats which, in case of war, would co-operate with the armed cruisers and battleships of the British navy.

Mark these words, Sir:

So that the policy of Australia at the present time is to build up a flotilla of submarines and torpedo boats,—

I have heard that described as a tin-pot navy——
—which, in case of war, would co-operate with the armed cruisers and battleships of the British navy. It was pointed out in discussing this question that Australia in providing a force of that kind would provide a force which it would be very difficult, if not impossible, for Great Britain to send across the seas and that in thus protecting themselves they were providing the best possible force for the protection of the Empire. So, I am at one with the Prime Minister so far as this is concerned.

No less forcible was the language of my hon. friend from North Toronto. He said:

The first and greatest objection which I have to a fixed money contribution is that it bears the aspect of hiring somebody else to do what we ourselves ought to do; as though a man, the father of a family, in lusty health and strength, should pay his neighbour something per month for looking after the welfare and safety of his home instead of doing that duty himself. That seems to me, when you work it out, to be a basic objection to this form of aid. It goes still further than that. Suppose you contribute this year your sum, and next year your equal sum, and thereafter year after year. After ten or twelve, or twenty, or thirty years, you will have paid out an immense amount of money. You will have been protected in the meantime; but in Canada itself there will be no roots struck, there will be no residue left.

There will be no preparation of the soil, or beginning of the growth of the product of defence. Yet some time or other, no one can doubt that with resources and with a population constantly increasing, we must and will have in this country a naval force of our own for our coast and home defence.

How the Change Came About to a Hybrid Policy

Four years ago, my right hon. friend said we must and will. To-day, he no longer says we must and will; but we on this side of the House continue to say we must and will. Now, Sir, I ask, why is it that my right hon. friend and his first lieutenant, the leaders of the Opposition then, who to-day have the responsibility of office, will not go on with the policy so forcibly put forward by them, instead of a policy under which, in the language of my right hon. friend, there will be no preparation

of the soil or beginning or growth of the product of defence? The reason, Sir, is not far to seek. The reason is well known: there is one, and only one, and it is because this subject of Imperial defence has been made the subject of contentious politics. It is the result of the alliance, the unholy alliance, which has been formed by hon. gentlemen opposite.

What is this contribution that we have to-day before us, and upon which we are asked to vote? It is big in money; it is big in figures. Is it as big otherwise as it ought to be? I ask every hon. member of this House; I ask every hon. gentleman sitting there: You give England two or three Dreadnoughts, to be paid for by Canada, but to be equipped, maintained and manned by England. Did I say, manned by England? I must qualify that statement. In justice to my right hon. friend, I must qualify that statement; because he told us that he had secured from the Imperial authorities the privilege of having Canadian officers serve on those ships. Oh, ye Tory jingoes, is that the amount of the sacrifice you are prepared to make? You are ready to furnish admirals, rear admirals, commodores, captains, officers of all grades, plumes, feathers, and gold lace; but you leave it to England to supply the bone and sinews on board those ships. You say that these ships shall bear Canadian names. That will be the only thing Canadian about them. You hire somebody to do your work; in other words, you are ready to do anything except the fighting. Is that, Sir, the true policy?

Some hon. MEMBERS: No, no.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: Is that the true policy? It is a hybrid policy, it is a cross between jingoism and Nationalism. Unless I mistake the spirit of the Canadian people, if they are true to their ideals, if they are true to their own blood, no matter to what province they belong, they will not be satisfied with this hybrid policy, but they will insist that their contribution shall be a contribution of money and of men as well, as was provided in our resolution of 1909.

A Canadian Naval Service Remains the True Policy

Mr. Speaker, it is not money that England wants at this moment. England never was wealthier than she is at the present time; her coffers are overflowing. What she wants is the hearts, the brains, and the brawn of her subjects all over the world. It has been stated—I hope it will prove true—that this generous contribution of \$35,000,000 to the Imperial treasury will create a deep impression in Europe amongst the great powers. I hope it is true, but would not the impression be much greater yet if, instead of this money contribution, the nations of Europe were to see the young daughters of the Empire, the young nations scattered over the whole world, building fleets of their own, to use the language of the resolution of 1909—

—in co-operation with and in close relation to the Imperial navy, along the lines suggested by the Admiralty at the last Imperial Conference, and in full sympathy with the view that the naval supremacy of Great Britain is essential to the security of commerce, the safety of the Empire, and the peace of the world.

Would not that create a greater impression? Many there are, and I am one of them, who deprecate the important fact that upon the distant

seas they do not count as many pennants as they counted some few years ago, but let this policy be adopted, and then the full quota, which we saw at one time, of our ships on the distant seas, would be re-established, and the white ensign, which has been for so many centuries the symbol of England's naval pride, would again unfurl its folds on the seven seas. Then, Sir, we would see, besides the white ensign, the colours of the young nations themselves, attesting the solidarity between mother and daughter. That is the policy which we adopted, that is the policy which we intend to follow.

But I may be told that that is not the policy recommended by the Admiralty to the Prime Minister. Sir, I deny that altogether. My right hon. friend did not go to England to consult the Admiralty about a policy. It is evident that when my right hon. friend went to England, he had abandoned the policy of a Canadian navy. He went to England—it is very clear from the last paragraph of the memorandum—to ask what they would accept for immediate aid. In other words, he went to England to ask what England would accept in the case of an emergency, although there was no emergency.

Therefore, we come back to the question: what is the true policy? Is it a policy of emergency, which, as stated by my hon. friend from North Toronto, which produces nothing and leaves nothing behind, or is it a policy of naval organization in Canada? That is the problem we have to deal with at the present time. Australia has adopted the same policy, and she has adopted it for the reason stated by my hon. friend in the debate of 1909: that having tried contribution, she found that contribution would not work. Australia, therefore, came to the conclusion which we came to: she came to the conclusion that gentlemen now sitting on the Government benches came to, but which they have abandoned, and abandoned for what reason? For no other than the well known reason of their alliance with the Nationalist party of Quebec.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we went on with the execution of our policy. We asked for tenders, with the intention of having ultimately a double unit, one on the Pacific ocean and one on the Atlantic ocean; we asked for tenders for four cruisers and six destroyers, which would cost \$11,280,000. We did not choose to award the contract, in view of the impending change of Government.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: Yes; we thought as the general elections were coming, that it would not be fair, in a matter of this kind, which was at issue between the two parties, to award the contract in case there might be, as there was, a change of government. I say now that the Government in power would have been better advised if they had awarded the contracts, and, had they done so, we would, at the present time, have under construction on the stocks in Montreal four cruisers and six destroyers.

There is another reason which causes us to stick to our policy of a Canadian navy. I have to thank my right hon. friend the Prime Minister for bringing down to-day some papers—not those for which I enquired yesterday—but some papers which show us the policy of Canadian construction of our navy is so strong that he and his Government are trying

to trifle with that question by endeavouring to get some ships built in Canada, which he tells us may happen some time in the spring. There is a better way of doing it. Let us have a Canadian navy, and as soon as practicable, and then all the ships will be built in Canada. I have reason to believe that the Minister of the Naval Service has actually an offer from one of the great British firms, to build the largest possible plant in Montreal if he chooses to have it.

Concerning Canada's Participation in Imperial Wars

I now come to another subject, which I would not have mentioned at all were it not for some observations made during the Debate on the Address by the hon. member for Kingston (Mr. Nickle). During the last electoral contest, I heard it many a time, and I read it many a time, that our Canadian navy was a separatist navy, and that it was, on account of something which was to be found in the Act, liable to be neutral in time of war. I have been too long in the fight to care very much for what may be said of me during an electoral contest; but when a thing is repeated upon the floor of Parliament within my hearing, I owe it to myself to take notice of it. And, just here, apropos of this, let me recall a classical and historical incident. On the eve of the battle of Salamis, Themistocles offered advice to the commander of the fleet of the Greeks, and, although that advice ultimately prevailed and carried the Greeks to victory, the Greek commander at first refused to accept it; and, on Themistocles persisting, the commander raised his staff to strike him. Themistocles said: 'Strike, but hear me.' Sir, I have been struck, but I still say: 'Hear me.' In refutation of the charge that the Navy Act was intentionally, on my part, separatist, I think it is sufficient for me to set up the record of my seventy years of life. I do not entertain, at the age of seventy, many of the ideas I had at twenty, or at thirty, or even at forty; but I trust I have not lived in vain, and that in the course of my long career I have learned something from observation and experience. Let the matter be settled once and for all, not only for myself, but for my friends here and outside, by my declaration: that any thought of separation from Great Britain, if any such thought exists anywhere, and I do not believe it does—would be a folly and a crime. As to the contention of my hon. friend from Kingston that in case of war our navy would be neutral, I have only this to observe. I said a moment ago that I hope I have not lived in vain, and I hope I am to be given credit for some common sense and some knowledge, and my answer to that contention is: when England is at war, we are at war, and the thought of being neutral would be like the command of King Canute to the sea to recede from his feet. No action of ours could bring that about. When England is at war, we are at war; but it does not follow that because we are at war we are actually in the conflict.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: We can be in the conflict only through two things, namely, actual invasion of our soil, or, the action of the Parliament of Canada. That seems to arouse the hilarity of gentlemen on the other side of the House.

Mr. GRAHAM: They have not read much history.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: Perhaps, if I answer these hon. gentlemen opposite by citing history, that will be the best answer of all. How many wars have we had since Canada became a British possession? Speaking from memory, we had first, in 1776, the war with the American colonies; we had next the war with France, which commenced in 1793 and lasted until the Battle of Waterloo in 1815; we had the war with the American Republic in 1812 and 1813; we had next the war with Turkey for the independence of Greece in 1827; we had next the Crimean war with Russia in 1854; we had next the war with China in 1860; we had next the expedition to Abyssinia in 1868; we had the expedition to Egypt in 1882; and last of all, we had the Boer war in 1899.

Mr. BENNETT (East Simcoe): We were in it.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: I did not expect such a compliment to the Liberal Government would come from my friend from East Simcoe. We were in it on account of the action taken by the Canadian Government and the Canadian Parliament at that time.

We were in it in the war with the American colonies in 1776; we were in it in the war with the American republic in 1812-13; but we were not in it in the war with France; we were not in it in the war with Turkey; we were not in it in the Crimean war; we were not in it in the expedition to Abyssinia or the Soudan war of 1885. We might have been in that, but Sir John A. Macdonald, then leader of the Government, refused. Why should we attempt to trifle with such questions as these? Is it not a fact that our forces can go to war only by the action of this Parliament? You may give your sanction, now or at any time if you choose; but no one in this country will claim that we can go to war, except by the will of Parliament or by the force of circumstances.

A Comparison of the Two Policies

Some objections have been made to our Naval Act, because it was said that the British Admiralty could not count at all times upon the support of the Canadian navy. I simply say that the Admiralty can count at all times upon the Canadian navy, because last year we passed an agreement with the Admiralty, whereby naval stations were created for the Canadian navy. The Canadian Atlantic station would include north of 30 north latitude and west of the meridian of 40 west longitude. The Canadian Pacific station would include north of 30 north latitude and east of the meridian of 180 west longitude. So the Admiralty knew that at all times in those bodies of water there were Canadian ships to guard the waters; and the moment the ships of an enemy of England appeared in those waters it was the duty of our navy to pounce upon them, to grapple with them and to sink them, in the same manner as if they had been in the harbour of Halifax. That is the interpretation placed upon that Act. My hon. friends, however, have to-day the administration of the Act; they can interpret it themselves; but surely they will not interpret it in the way it is said they could. They can amend it as they please; but, whatever they do, if they are sincere, as I hope they are, they cannot put any other construction than the construction I put upon this Act.

The present policy which my right hon. friend proposes settles nothing. The problem that you have to deal with is one which demands a permanent policy—a policy for to-day, for to-morrow, and for every day, so long as the armaments grow in Europe; and the duty which you owe to yourselves, to Canada, and to the Empire, is the enactment of a permanent policy. As regards the creation of a Canadian navy, you have apparently decided against that. In respect to contribution, does any one imagine that you will have only one contribution? Contributions must be recurring and again recurring, and, in the words of my hon. friend from North Toronto, they leave no trace behind them. As I understand from the speech of my hon. friend, he does not want to have a permanent policy on this subject, because, he says, 'Before we have a permanent policy, we must have a voice in all questions of peace or war.' This is a very large contract. If we are to have a discussion of that question, this is not the time for it. It is not germane to the question which we have before us to-day. We have the question of defence to deal with. When we have to deal with the danger of an enemy rushing upon us, whom we must be called to face at any moment, are we to fold our arms and do nothing until we have settled the question as to whether or not we shall have a voice in all matters of war or peace? My hon. friend is like the Emperor of Constantinople, who went to Italy to discuss questions of theology, when his city was on the eve of being assaulted by the Turks, who finally captured it. If we go on discussing the question of having a voice in matters of peace and war, the enemy may be upon us before we have settled that question, and we may never have any occasion to deal with it at all. It is a very important question, and I do not minimize it in any way; but it must be discussed separately and not in conjunction with the present question, or we shall be at a standstill.

Whether we shall or shall not have a voice in all questions affecting peace and war is a very large proposition, and I would not, at the present time, pronounce finally upon it; but there are certain objections that present themselves at once to my mind. The diplomatic service of England is carried on by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and it is to-day in as good hands as it ever was. These transactions are very minute, very serious, and sometimes must be carried on with great secrecy. I understand that my right hon. friend proposes to the English Admiralty that there should be a representative of the Canadian Government all the time in England to confer with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on all questions on which war may probably arise. If this is done for Canada, it must be done for Australia, for New Zealand, for South Africa and for Newfoundland, and I doubt very much if the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs would receive much assistance from such a multitude of advisers. Supposing they do not agree, or supposing they do agree, how can we pretend to dictate in these matters, or even to take a part? The Foreign Office, only last year, had to deal with the question of the division of Persia. Are we to understand that Canada and all the other Dominions would be invited to discuss such a question with the Foreign Office? A few years ago, the Afghan boundary question was a burning question with the Foreign Office. Of late years, it has been put in the background by the fact that Russia has not been in a position

to be aggressive. But that question may be revived. Within the last year, when the German Emperor sent warships to Agadir, the Foreign Office had to take immediate action upon the question whether Germany should be allowed a footing in North Africa. Would the Dominion of Canada also be interested in and be consulted upon this question? If so, it seems to me that this is opening a door to consequences which must be carefully considered before any action is taken. I do not wish to condemn the view taken by the right hon. gentleman; I do not now approve or condemn it; the subject is too new. But the point upon which I appeal to him, and to which I ask the attention of the House, is this, that we cannot postpone our preparation for defence until this question is settled. It may take a long time to settle it. Therefore, let it be settled by itself; but, in the meantime, let our preparations go on.

Autonomy the Real Basis of Empire

My right hon. friend concluded the argumentative part of his speech with the statement that, in claiming for the overseas dominions the power to have a voice in all questions of peace and war, he was inviting the attention of the statesmen of Great Britain 'to the real problem of Imperial existence.' Mark the words: 'the real problem of Imperial existence.' I think it would be difficult for my right hon. friend, or anybody else, to convince us that the existence of the British Empire rests upon so slender a thread. We have been accustomed to believe, and we will continue to believe, that it rests upon a firmer basis. Sir, I am not indifferent—far from it—to anything that concerns the unity of the British Empire. This agglomeration of continents under the British Crown has something in it which strikes the imagination, something which has always had, at all events for me, a great attraction. But I have always believed, and will continue to believe, that the firm basis of the British Empire is, next to the British Crown, the local autonomy of the different dependencies; that is to say, their working out of their own destinies to the central end of the Empire. The Crown is the great bond, the cement, which binds together the scattered continents over the whole world. The Crown is a purely sentimental bond; but that bond, though purely sentimental, has proven itself stronger than armies and navies; has shown itself to be equal to all occasions. I do not believe the Empire is in danger; I do not believe it can be cemented by the means suggested by my right hon. friend. I believe the relations of the different parts of the Empire to the Mother Country are not perfect, but that essentially they are perfectible. You can discuss problems of improvement; there is no occasion to discuss problems of existence.

It is with these views that we approach this subject. And I repeat now, in conclusion, what I said at the beginning, that I have endeavoured to approach this subject on the same plane as my right hon. friend. I do not question his motives when he says that what he has in mind is the grandeur of our common empire. I hope he will not discuss my motive when I say that I approach the question in the same spirit. If we differ with him, it is because we believe that under existing circumstances our policy is more conducive to what he has in mind than the policy which

he has announced. Therefore, I beg to move the following as an amendment to the resolution:*

The Liberal Amendment

That all the words after the word 'That' be struck out, and the following be substituted therefor:—

'This House declines to concur in the said resolution and orders that the same be referred back to the committee with instructions to amend the same in the following particulars, namely, to strike out all the words after clause (a) and substitute therefor the following:

'The memorandum prepared by the Board of Admiralty on the general naval situation of the Empire and communicated to this House by the right hon. the Prime Minister on December 5th, shows that several of the most important of the foreign powers have adopted a definite policy of rapidly increasing their naval strength.

'That this condition has compelled the United Kingdom to concentrate its naval forces in home waters, involving the withdrawal of ships from the outlying portions of the Empire.

'That such withdrawal renders it necessary that Canada, without further delay, should enter actively upon a permanent policy of naval defence.

'That any measure of Canadian aid to Imperial naval defence which does not employ a permanent policy of participation by ships owned, manned and maintained by Canada and contemplating construction as soon as possible in Canada, is not an adequate or satisfactory expression of the aspirations of the Canadian people in regard to naval defence, and is not an assumption by Canada of her fair share in the maintenance of the naval strength of the Empire.

'This House regrets to learn the intention of the Government to indefinitely postpone the carrying out by Canada of a permanent naval policy.

'It is the opinion of this House that measures should be taken at the present session to give effect actively and speedily to the permanent naval policy embodied in the Naval Service Act of 1910 passed pursuant to the resolution unanimously approved by this House in March, 1909.

'This House is further of the opinion that to increase the power and mobility of the Imperial navy by the addition by Canada, under the above Act, of two fleet units, to be stationed on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of Canada, respectively, rather than by a contribution of money or ships, is the policy best calculated to afford relief to the United Kingdom in respect to the burden of Imperial naval defence, and, in the words of the Admiralty memorandum, to restore greater freedom to the movements of the British squadrons in every sea and directly promote the security of the dominions and that the Government of Canada should take such steps as shall lead to the accomplishment of this purpose as speedily as possible.'

*The Resolution, as moved by the Right Hon. R. L. Borden, M.P., was as follows:—

"Resolved, That it is expedient, in connection with the Bill now before this House

intituled An Act to authorize measures for increasing the effective Naval Forces of the Empire, to provide:—

(a) That from and out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Canada there may be paid and applied a sum not exceeding thirty-five million dollars for the purpose of immediately increasing the effective Naval Forces of the Empire;

(b) That the said sum shall be used and applied under the direction of the Governor in Council in the construction and equipment of battleships or armoured cruisers of the most modern and powerful type;

(c) That the said ships, when constructed and equipped, shall be placed by the Governor in Council at the disposal of His Majesty for the common defence of the Empire; and

(d) That the said sum shall be paid, used and applied, and the said ships shall be constructed and placed at the disposal of His Majesty subject to such terms, conditions and arrangements as may be agreed upon between the Governor in Council and His Majesty's Government.

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ation Office, Ottawa, Canada

